



**October 2005**

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## Gillmor Washington Update

As your Representative in Congress, I am proud to represent Ohio's Fifth Congressional District in Washington, DC.

In order to keep the citizens of the Fifth District better informed and up to date on my activities in Washington, DC and back home in Ohio, I have published the October edition of my monthly newsletter. It is my goal to provide you with the information you need to stay informed on the issues important to Ohio. In this edition of my Monthly Update, I have focused on the important events that have taken place in the month of September and inform you of upcoming October events in the Fifth District. I hope that you will find this information beneficial. Please contact me should you have any questions or comments.

## It's time for fiscal restraint

In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, our nation has been put under considerable fiscal pressure. Private citizens have opened their hearts and their pocketbooks to help the victims affected by these natural disasters and Congress is providing the additional emergency resources necessary to rebuild. Cleanup efforts are underway and officials from the federal government are working around-the-clock with state and local officials to bring normalcy to our displaced neighbors.



Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, Congress approved \$62 billion in emergency funding for FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, temporary housing and the movement of nearly 60,000 military troops into the affected region. In this case, funding the hurricane relief efforts has become a priority and a duty of the federal government. However, as the price tag for recovery efforts continues to increase, the time has come for a

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discussion of how to pay the bill.

The fact is, almost every year since the founding of the United States, our government has lived beyond its means. To date, every American citizen has nearly \$27,000 in public debt riding on our backs. This debt comes from more than two centuries of using our federal credit card to pay for programs and incentives which we could not otherwise afford. Today, as a result of these devastating hurricanes, we may add as much as another \$200 billion to our national debt. The time has come for us to close our nation's wallet, reverse our deficit spending and treat the government's budget like we would our own.

Spending on programs such as national defense and funding the operating budgets of all federal agencies represent only 39 percent of our yearly budget, an all-time low. Conversely, mandatory spending on programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security now account for more than 61 percent of our national budget. Healthcare costs are rising, we are living much longer and in the near future, millions of baby boomers will retire. These strains will push the cost of entitlement programs like Medicare and Social Security even higher, further escalating our nation's funding woes.

The only way to reduce our expenses and reverse deficit spending is by reevaluating the programs which we as Americans have come to expect. These are not decisions which can be made lightly and they are not decisions which should be made as knee-jerk reactions to natural disasters. We must instead agree as a nation to reassess our long-term goals and fund only those priorities which remain crucial to our people. I am confident that residents of the Fifth District understand the need for financial independence from our national debt and the hard decisions which come with this lofty and necessary goal.

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## Gillmor calls on House to maintain priorities when debating budget

Following the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, some of my colleagues in the House began a public discussion about how to fund the relief efforts. Many reforms were proposed to help alleviate the high cost of cleanup efforts. While I agree we must set our priorities, one proposal which I can not support was a proposal to delay the implementation of the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. In response to the suggestion that this implementation could be delayed, I authored a letter to the editor of *The Hill*, a Washington, D.C. newspaper read by many of my colleagues in the House and Senate entitled "*Don't pay for hurricane relief by delaying drugs for seniors*".

The following is my letter which was printed in *The Hill*:

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# THE HILL



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Don't pay for hurricane relief by delaying drugs for seniors

by Rep. Paul Gillmor (Ohio-05)

As the price tag for the recovery of Hurricane Katrina and now Hurricane Rita looks to surpass \$200 billion, there has already been discussion of how to pay the bill. In this case, funding the hurricane-relief efforts has become a priority and duty of the federal government, but in deciding exactly how to pay for these costs one idea should be taken off the table — the proposal by some members of Congress to roll back the start of the Medicare prescription-drug program. This suggestion could not be more damaging to America's seniors and has no place in this discussion.

When Congress passed the prescription-drug program in 2003, we promised America's senior citizens that they would benefit from a voluntary first-of-its-kind program to provide them with medical coverage. This is the most dramatic change to Medicare since its inception in 1965.

As the cost of healthcare rises and America's seniors are further burdened with the high cost of prescription drugs, we made a commitment to our greatest generation that they would receive the best care.

This program is a substantial investment of federal resources, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has been working too hard preparing our seniors for this benefit to face now the chopping block of political pressure. Only four months before the prescription-drug plan becomes effective, some members have proposed delaying the inevitable rollout of the Medicare prescription drug program. This proposal will erode the trust which exists between America's seniors and their lawmakers and I, for one, do not believe the cost of our devastating natural disasters should be carried on the backs of America's seniors.

The costs of Hurricane Katrina are a considerable short-term expense, but they should not jeopardize our nation's long-term goals. America deserves a Congress dedicated to fiscal responsibility while not responding with knee-jerk cuts to the programs that will benefit a great number of our citizens.

We will have to find meaningful cuts to offset government spending on our relief efforts; however, we have made a promise to America's seniors that I intend to keep. It is time to find a real solution to our deficit spending while reassuring America's seniors that Congress stands behind them in their time of need.



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## House votes overwhelmingly to create a national sex offender database

In September, the House of Representatives passed legislation which I have introduced for two years to create a national sex offender database. My bill was incorporated into the Children's Safety Act of 2005, a bill which includes provisions from one dozen pieces of legislation aimed at protecting children from sex offenders. The Children's Safety Act of 2005 passed the House by a vote of 371 to 52.

The passage of the Children's Safety Act of 2005 is a great step forward by the House to make our communities safer from sex offenders. For two years now, I have been advocating the need for a national database to track sex offenders. To me, this seemed like commonsense public policy and by passing this bill, my colleagues agreed.

My legislation was named Dru's Law after Dru Sjodin, a 22-year-old North Dakota college student who was killed in 2003 by a sex offender who had served 23 years behind bars for rape. Dru's killer lived as a registered sex offender only minutes across the border in Minnesota and was unknown to the citizens and authorities of North Dakota.

All across America, our communities are reeling from the pain caused by sexual predators. While a national database may not protect you in the way that a police officer can, this legislation ensures that every person in America has unfettered access to information about sex offenders. If learning of a sex offender living in your area makes you the slightest bit more aware, then this database is well worth it.



*Congressman Gillmor speaks at a press conference on Capitol Hill regarding the passage of the Children's Safety Act of 2005.*

The bill to create a national sex offender database will use existing law enforcement records to produce a nationwide registry available to anyone with Internet access. If enacted, users will be able to choose the geographic radius in which to search the location of predators in the area. The ultimate goal is to produce consistent records which offer the same information to users from New York to California.

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According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, there are more than 550,000 convicted sex offenders across America. More than 13,000 of these predators reside in Ohio. A national sex offender database can offer a relief from fear by empowering us with the information to protect ourselves against sexual predators. When it comes to sex offenders in our communities, knowledge is power and the best offense can truly be a strong defense.

Having passed the U.S. House, the Children's Safety Act of 2005 must now be reviewed by the U.S. Senate before it may be sent to President Bush to be signed into law.

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## House passes bill to ease gas prices

This month, I joined my colleagues as the House passed legislation to increase American fuel supply, promote conservation, and ban price gouging.

This bill is another step by the House to create the energy infrastructure our nation needs. Along with the Energy Bill, signed into law last August, this bill will increase capacity and streamline our fuel supply, all in an effort to reduce the burden of high prices and the lack of available resources.



Provisions in the GAS Act:

- Encourage U.S. refineries to increase supply;
- Prevent price spikes by limiting the number of "boutique" fuels in America from 17 to 6;
- Promote conservation through carpooling and fuel-efficiency;
- Ban price gouging; and
- Require the FTC to study processing fees from credit card companies and their impact on price inflation.

The GAS Act and the Energy Bill have been two major policies produced by Congress this year to increase energy supply and ease prices. With 47 percent of our refining capacity in the Gulf states, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have had devastating effects on our nation's energy supplies. This crisis will not go away on its own and has now become an issue of national security. I am hopeful that the U.S. Senate will pass the GAS Act soon so that we may provide the relief our citizens desperately need.

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## Preparing for the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit

This November 15th, seniors across America will have the option to sign up for first-of-its-kind prescription drug coverage which will become effective on January 1, 2006. This voluntary benefit, created by Congress in 2003, will assist seniors and other Medicare beneficiaries with the high cost of prescription drugs and provide additional services such as preventative care and a free "Welcome to Medicare" physical. In an effort to prepare you for your Medicare decisions, I have created some frequently asked questions which you may find helpful.

**Q. When does enrollment begin for the Medicare Prescription Drug benefit and when does coverage start?**

*A. The enrollment period for the Medicare Prescription Drug benefit begins on November 15, 2005. If you have enrolled by December 31, 2005, your coverage will begin on January 1, 2006. Eligible Americans who have not enrolled by the first of the year may enroll through May 15, 2006 without receiving a penalty. If you enroll in 2006, drug coverage will begin on the first day of the month following your enrollment. You may also change plans through May 15, 2006.*

**Q. What type of coverage is offered through the Medicare Prescription Drug benefit?**

*A. While every plan is different, the standard drug benefit you will receive through the Medicare prescription drug benefit is 75 percent of your annual drug costs up to \$2,250 and 95 percent coverage after \$3,600 out-of-pocket expenses.*

**Q. What will the prescription drug coverage cost me?**

*A. With more than 10 national plans and many state or regional plans being offered, coverage will vary. However, many plans offer enrollment for a monthly premium of around \$35 and an annual deductible of \$250.*

**Q. How do I know if I qualify for additional assistance?**

*A. Nearly one-third of all seniors may qualify for additional assistance with their prescription drug costs. Currently, individuals with annual incomes below \$14,355 and married couples with combined annual incomes below \$19,425 may qualify for a reduction or elimination of monthly premiums and deductibles. You may check eligibility for additional assistance by contacting the Social Security Administration (1-800-772-1213).*

**Q. Where can I find more information on these benefits?**

*A. Throughout October, seniors will receive the Medicare and You handbook in the mail. This handbook features complete step-by-step information on how to enroll as well as what plans and benefits are available to you. Many resources are also available by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), visiting [www.MEDICARE.gov](http://www.MEDICARE.gov) or con-*

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*tacting the Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) office (1-800-548-9034).*

## Calling on the Supreme Court to affirm the Pledge of Allegiance

After another federal judge in California overruled that the use of the words “Under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed legislation calling on the U.S. Supreme Court to find the use of the Pledge of Allegiance in America’s schools to be consistent with the Constitution of the United States. H.Con.Res. 245 overwhelmingly passed the House by a vote of 383 to 31.

Once again, activist judges in California are interfering with our way of life. This is the second time in three years that federal judges in California have attempted to legislate from the bench at the cost of the Pledge of Allegiance. I think the overwhelming vote of support today by the U.S. House shows that there is little support for the judges’ actions and even little support for their attack on America’s values.

Most recently, Judge Lawrence Karlton from the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California ruled that the use of “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violated the rights of children to be “free from a coercive requirement to affirm God.” Judge Karlton felt bound by the precedent of the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals which ruled the pledge unconstitutional.

The California rulings run counter to a ruling in Virginia and require that the Supreme Court involve itself in this issue at its earliest convenience. Since 1954, the children of our nation have recited the Pledge, complete with the words ‘under God,’ in deference to our nation, our fallen patriots and a belief in our republic. It is not up to unelected judges in California to overrule the will of the American people to continue a tradition which serves to reinforce the morals inherent in our society.

In the Resolution passed in September, the U.S. House calls on the U.S. Supreme Court “at the earliest opportunity” to resolve the conflict between the Court of Appeals in California and Virginia and confirm the importance and constitutionality of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in America’s schools. On Flag Day, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation to add the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. At that time, President Eisenhower said, “In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which for-





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ever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war.”

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## Contact me

If you have any suggestions on topics you would like to see addressed in my monthly updates, require any additional information, or would like to inform me of your views on matters concerning the federal government, please contact me anytime in Washington, D.C. or in any of my Ohio offices.

If you wish to forward your questions or concerns via U.S. mail, please address your correspondence to one of my Ohio offices as mail sent to the Longworth House Office Building in Washington is subject to a lengthy screening process and may not reach my office in a timely manner. You will find additional information on issues of federal concern on my website at <http://gillmor.house.gov>.